

# *My Tarbiyyah* *My own Responsibility*



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# *A Do-It-Yourself Approach to Self Development*

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## **PREFACE**

### **How to do Our Own Tarbiyyah?**

This is the most crucial question in our life, such that it can result in our eternal success or failure. We face this question throughout our lifespans because the struggle to do our own *terbiyyah* is one that stays with us till our very last breath. This question is very distressing, and it rises every now and again. While we try to get rid of our past failures, new challenges keep engulfing us. In pursuit of achieving what we desire in our hearts and what we long to see in our lives, we come across many hurdles and we keep stumbling on almost every step of the way.

We plan, we muster courage, and we make commitments. However, on the very first step we discover that nothing is weaker than our commitment. Our steps falter when we find our determination to be inadequate. We sketch out lofty plans and later find ourselves incompetent to execute them. When our desires grab hold of us, we lose the grasp on every other thing. We are then caught in the whirlwind of our emotions. Everything we were so meticulously planning drowns in the depths of disappointment that we feel at that moment. It's not that we do not have knowledge or we are ignorant. But at such decisive moments, we tend to forget all our notions of right and wrong and get fascinated by what is sinful. And then follows the vicious cycle - we do *tawbah* and *istaghfar*, repenting and asking Allah (SWT) for forgiveness, and still keep on sinning, over and over again.

In such a situation, the shadows of deep despair start lingering around us. Our resolve begins to shatter and we get disheartened. We try to use our excuses and justifications as crutches but that leads us to even further ruin our efforts. Our hearts begin to search for false hopes. We say: "There should be 'a method' whereby our planning and resolution do not weaken, 'a method' that can remove the love of *dunya* from our hearts forever, 'a method' by which seeking repentance once would be sufficient to always keep us safe from that sin."

The fact of the matter is that the angels are already coded with such method. In such a situation, what need would there be for creating mankind? Likewise, false is the hope of finding a perfect person who would hold our hand and lead us across the perilous paths of life; or some pious man who would give us a miracle look or pray for us and we would need no further effort or struggle for our *tarbiyyah*. Those who come across such thoughts should think again. Such a perfect human never existed, not even in the form of prophets (peace be upon them all). When such wishful thinking disappoints us (as it is inherently bound to do), we try to feel content in our miserable state and attach all our hopes to the forgiveness of Allah (SWT) who is All-Forgiving and Ever Merciful. The intentions and plans we had for our own *tarbiyyah* - which were often nothing more than hollow wishes - are all put aside. And not much time passes when we change gears and head out to wrong directions or at times even backtrack ourselves, losing whichever milestones we had achieved.

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There are different reasons behind such feelings, experiences, and problems. There may be wrong concepts surrounding our ideas of *tarbiyyah* and personal development. There may be false expectations or unrealistically high standards. There may even be a lack of knowledge regarding correct methodology, and we would not know where to begin from and how to keep progressing. Or there may be ignorance of flaws and weaknesses that are inherent in human nature. At times there may be another extreme where unlimited extensive efforts make it impossible to carry on. While some other times it may happen that we leave the tap of misguided or wrong influences running, and then we are left mopping up the mess.

Thus, it is no wonder that we are repeatedly confronted by the feeling that there is nothing more difficult and stressful than doing our own *tarbiyyah*. We may even begin to feel that this task is beyond our capacity.

In this book, I have attempted to answer this extremely important and yet deeply perplexing question. I have also attempted to make it clear that this apparently impossible goal is after all not that difficult. I have tried to expose its reality, that is:

- 1) The task is quite easy, and that is the way it needed to be,
- 2) That we have to realize that a goal- based solely on our wishes and desires can never be achieved until and unless it is accompanied by sincere intentions and practical efforts, and
- 3) That these efforts have to be simple to carry out, easy, and completely doable by us as humans.

*Tarbiyyah* can only take place when we take control of our life and do it ourselves. It can never be done merely by reading books, listening to lectures, attending courses, or benefiting from the company of elders. It is a principle of human nature that no one can do for us what is meant for us to do by ourselves. Of course, *Tarbiyyah* cannot be done without the *tawfiq* (opportunity) and help granted by Allah SWT. However, this opportunity and divine help are presented by Allah (SWT) only if we seek it ourselves.

يَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أَنَابَ

"[He] guides to Himself those who turn to Him" (Ar-Raad, 13:27).

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ

"As for those who accept Guidance, Allah increases them in their guidance and causes them to grow in God-fearing" (Muhammad, 47:17).

Remember: This book is not going to absolve you of your responsibility to work on yourself. What is needed to be done by you cannot be done by this book. It does not have a mystical word which will

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read to get some secret key to open the doors of *tazkiyah* (self-purification) and *tarbiyyah* before you. Nor does this book act as a magic wand which can transform you and your heart. However, the aim is to give you access to simple and clear directions and to embark you on your journey to *tarbiyyah* and *tazkiyah*. At the same time, our intention is to remove all misunderstandings which may lead you to wrong paths or result in despair.

There is no such book which can encompass all aspects of life, answer each question that puzzles us, and provide solutions to all our problems. Nonetheless, we will try to provide you with some basic guidelines. With the will of Allah (SWT), it will help you to open the doors and pave the way to achieve your goals by yourself. You will learn to find the answers from your own heart. You will be able to remove the hurdles with your own hands. Furthermore, it would not only increase you in your knowledge but it will also generate the urge to act upon that knowledge and boost you with enthusiasm, power, and skills that are required along the way. And Allah alone grants *tawfiq* and He Alone is the Helper.

I hope and pray that Allah (SWT) makes this book useful to its readers and provides them with ease in choosing the path of *Yusra* (ease): the path of good deeds and *taqwa* (piety), the path of *jihad* (struggle) and the establishment of the *deen* (religion), the path of forgiveness and Paradise, the path to get closer to our Rabb and to seek His pleasure.

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## THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF *TARBIYYAH*

*Tarbiyyah* is an essential and inevitable element of life. It is the desire of every heart and is cherished by everyone. But why is this so?

### **Importance of Tarbiyyah and Its Desirability**

We love to spend our whole life seeking the goals that we hold dear. All the enjoyment and colours of life are embedded in the pursuit and attainment of these beloved goals. It's not the point at this stage as to what these goals are. The goals can be sublime or lowly, broad or limited, materialistic or spiritual, personal or communal, and good or bad. The kind of the goals will determine the kind of *Tarbiyyah* required.

It's also not the point if these goals and the hardships to attain these goals are really worthwhile or not. The point we must keep in mind is that it is in human nature that if a person really loves a goal, he also loves to successfully achieve that goal.

At multiple occasions, the Qur'an defines success in terms of "*fauz*" and "*falah*". Once you understand that it is in man's nature to yearn and strive for success, you can understand all the verses in the Qur'an where it invites and guides humanity towards the real success.

When a goal is beloved to you, it becomes a matter of heart and soul for you to gather and utilize all the resources to achieve it. You also take pains to refine those resources in order to increase the likelihood of success. And finally, you exert your utmost effort to ensure that you successfully achieve that goal.

You must keep in mind that if you claim to care about a goal, it is not your speech or writings that declare your devotion towards it. Rather, your commitment is visible by your willingness to gather resources and the efforts you exert to accomplish that goal.

You also need to keep in mind that when the goal is clear to you and you are passionate about it then it will itself direct and guide you on how to best achieve it. It will work as a lighthouse and a compass. It will direct you as to what resources it needs and where you can find them. It will guide you and set milestones for you to make sure that you are headed in the right direction. Your goal will open paths



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for you and instruct you as to what steps to take. And if you ever go off-track, it is your goal which will help you find your way back like a lighthouse or a compass.

What resources you require and how you can cultivate them is also determined by your goal. If you want to become a soldier, you will not be looking for books and papers. Rather, you will arm yourself with weapons. If you want to become a scholar, the need of the hour will be for you to look for books and pick up your pen.

However, one thing that each and every goal requires is your own personality. I am using the word "personality" in a broader term. It includes everything associated with you - your body, your intellect, your defining characteristics, your heart, your emotions, your character, and your behaviour. What really defines *tarbiyyah* is how best you develop your personality to make yourself worthy of achieving the goal of your life.

Without *tarbiyyah*, you will be unable to develop your personality and as a result, your beloved goal will remain out of your reach. Therefore, if we really want to successfully achieve our goal, we must work on our *tarbiyyah* by grooming and nurturing our personality.

The process of *tarbiyyah* can either be an organized and coordinated effort or a haphazard one. Similarly, it can be a conscious effort or at times it may be even unconscious. There is one type of *tarbiyyah* that involves the nurturing of the physical self. Here, one looks after the vessel (body) that carries our soul. The human body and the faculties it has been blessed with are all taken care of in this form of *tarbiyyah*. Specifically, the faculties of conscious thought, sight, hearing, understanding, and action are all nurtured. Although a part of this kind of *tarbiyyah* involves personal interest and efforts, it is largely done on auto-pilot. Whether we want to or not, whether we make the effort or don't, this *tarbiyyah* runs its course on its own. Or at least that's how it appears. The fact of the matter however is that even this process does not take place without the permission of our Rabb, and His infinite mercy and love for His creation. It begins its course right from the very first breath we take as a living being and carries on for as long as we live. Without this *tarbiyyah*, our existence would not come into reality. And if it did, it would take on no discernible meaning of its own.

The second kind of *tarbiyyah* has to do with our spiritual selves. Our hearts and minds, knowledge and thoughts, feelings and emotions, actions and attitudes, characters and behaviours are all nurtured in this form of *tarbiyyah*. One portion of this *tarbiyyah* is given to us in our genes at birth. The other is handed out to us by the environment where we grow up. Apparently, this *tarbiyyah* happens as a result of our own intentions and efforts that translate into our actions. However, if we examine closely, we will realize that our intentions and efforts are just the prerequisites and in actuality, here again, it is our Rabb who is the Ultimate Caretaker and Nurturer.

It is Allah (SWT) who is in full control of whatever He created in His universe. Nothing can happen here without His permission and assistance. How can anything take place without His permission on



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its own or by someone other than Him the Almighty? Therefore, can there be anything more important and necessary than this *tarbiyyah* by our Rabb?

For it is the result of this divine *terbiyyah* that we are able to acquire our physical, educational, intellectual and professional abilities and skills. They help us to run grand errands in the world. It is these skills that serve us to achieve qualities like cultivating a kind soul, sound character, and rightful manners. A pure heart, strong character, and compassionate nature are some of the most beautiful qualities that one can find in all this earth. They are amongst the earth's most beloved, dearest and precious attributes. These attributes are loved in this world because these are what help us find love in its most real and pure form. And in the Hereafter too, if a person wants to be amongst the favourites and most beloved of our Rabb, to be close to Him and Paradise, then he can only rely on this kind of *tarbiyyah*. What can be more beloved to anyone than these blessings? How then can it be that *tarbiyyah* is not beloved to us while it is the means through which we attain the goals that we love most?

This is why success and glory in *this-world* and in the Hereafter depend upon working on our *tarbiyyah* and performing *tazkiyah*. Allah (SWT) says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى

"He, who purified himself shall prosper" (Al Ala'a, 87:14).

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا

"He, who purifies it, will prosper" (Ash-Shams, 91:9).

The evergreen gardens of Paradise, its rivers, and the highest ranks are for *ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى* "those who purify themselves" (Taha, 20:76).

### **Paradise: The Ultimate Goal of Tarbiyyah**

We must carefully decide which purpose deserves to be regarded as the dearest. Around which purpose can we centre all our efforts for our *tarbiyyah*? It is very important to answer this question at the very first stage because the nature of the purpose will determine as to what steps we must take. If a person's goal is education, they will frequent places of learning in order to be successful. They will learn from scholars, deepen their relationship with the pen and paper, and master the art of reasoning and communication. If a person has decided that their purpose in life is spiritual development, then he will head to religious retreats and engage in *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) while remaining secluded. However, if that person would be required to fight a battle and win the war, he will have to put aside his books, his pens, his *dhikr*, and the seclusion he sought for religious purposes, and get a weapon and learn how to wield it.

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It is obvious that the most beloved goal in our lives is to seek Allah (SWT)'s pleasure and to enter Paradise in the eternal life after death. In other words, it is to protect ourselves from Allah (SWT)'s wrath and Hellfire. If we are protected from His wrath then we will be protected from Hellfire and if we attain His pleasure then we will enter Paradise. Surely Allah (SWT)'s pleasure is something greater than Paradise. **وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ** "They shall, above all, enjoy the good pleasure of Allah (SWT). That is the great achievement" (Taubah, 9:72). But there is no difference between the two. The desire for Paradise is a manifestation of the desire for attaining Allah (SWT)'s good pleasure. If Allah (SWT) is pleased with us then He will shield us from the fire of hell and show His pleasure by entering us in His gardens. Those who say, "We only wish for Allah's pleasure and we don't care about Paradise", are people who are not acquainted with the actual concept of Allah's pleasure. Look, at one point it has been said:

**وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ**

"Among men there is a kind who sells himself seeking means to please Allah; Allah is Immensely Kind to such devoted servants" (al-Baqarah, 2:207). At another point, it has been said,

**إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ**

"Surely Allah has purchased of the believers their lives and their belongings and in return has promised that they shall have Paradise" (Tawbah, 9:111).

Allah has reminded us of this reality clearly and repeatedly. That our whole struggle in this life should focus on successfully entering paradise in our real and never-ending life after death. One must choose between the life of *this*-world and the life of *that*-world.

**وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ**

"In the Hereafter, there is (either) grievous chastisement (or) forgiveness from Allah and (His) good pleasure" (Hadid, 57:20).

To love and indulge in anything of this earthly realm is like opting for a veil of deception where your eyes are tricked into believing what your desires want you to believe. For the fact is that as soon as you take your last breath, that worldly thing will abandon you. You will be alone. This is because everything in this temporary realm is inherently mortal. Nothing is eternal except for your Lord and the pleasure of your Lord. Everything that glitters and glimmers in this world will set just as the sun and moon set.

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If we make the glittering and glimmering dear to us then we are doomed to sink with them, and along with us all of our struggles and achievements too.

For this reason, Allah has stated:

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"So, run and compete with one another to seek your Lord's forgiveness and a Garden whose width is as the width of the heaven and the earth" (Hadid, 57:21).

At another place, Allah states:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ

"And run on the path to forgiveness from your lord and paradise." (Al-Imran 3:133).

Your whole life must be a race towards Paradise - you cannot look here and there, you cannot pause, nor can you be lazy. This means that your entire *tarbiyyah* must aim to teach you how to win this race.

All the colours and joy in our life revolve around succeeding in our goals. And the greatest kind of success is reaching Paradise:

وَأَنَّمَا تُوفَّيُونَ أَجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَن زُحِرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ

"And you will be given your full reward on the Day of Resurrection. Then, whoever is spared the Fire and is admitted to Paradise has indeed been successful" (Al-Imran, 3:185).

And what a success! What a huge success (*al-fouz ul kabir*), a success that is evident (*al fouz ul mubeen*), a glorious success (*al fouz ul azeem*)! At sixteen instances in the Qur'an, after describing Paradise and its delightful blessings, Allah (SWT) says: *wa zaalikal fouz ul azeem*. More than a hundred times, Allah refers to the blessings of Paradise. At particular instances, He talks about each of these blessings in great detail. He makes it so tempting that we have a heartfelt longing for these blessings.

We are encouraged to make these blessings the desired objective of our whole life. It is said: لِّمِثْلِ هَذَا "For the like of it should the workers work" (As-Saffat, 37:61). Truly, this is the greatest victory. And for only such a victory should the workers work.

And it is said in the Qur'an:

وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ

"...so, let all the competitors compete for this" (Al-Mutaffifin, 83:26).

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This is how Allah (SWT) builds excitement and enthusiasm in His servants. He creates the desire and passion, so at the end of our mortal lives, our heart and soul are happy by such a beautiful end:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

“O serene soul! Return to your Lord well-pleased (with your blissful destination), well-pleasing (to your Lord). So, enter among My (righteous) servants and enter My Paradise” (Al-Fajr, 89:27-30).

### The Decision to Focus

The first step on the path of *tarbiyyah* is that you get yourself focused on Paradise. You have to decide one and for all that entering Paradise is the goal of your life, and all what you want is to successfully achieve it. This focus gives you clarity of vision. Hence you realize that the sole objective of the entire struggle for your *tarbiyyah* is to make you worthy of Paradise.

Along with narrowing your focus, you need to make a resolution. This is going to be a lifelong resolution. It is critically important that you make this resolution after giving it much thought and understanding. Though later, you will also need to frequently remind yourself of your resolution. You can never reach anywhere if you have your feet in two different boats. If you do this, you will only lose your balance and will always be faltering and stumbling.

The shore will remain distant and out of reach. Unfortunately, most of the problems that we face in *tarbiyyah* stem from this double-mindedness. You should strive to make one concerted push and wholeheartedly climb aboard the boat heading to Paradise. Your state of mind, heart, and emotions should all be in unison as you practically take your first step. You will be surprised to see the astonishing results!

For this purpose, it will be beneficial if you perform *wudhu*, pray two *rakah* of *salat* with as much *khushoo* and *khuzu* as you can muster. Then, recall all the punishment and pain of Hell, and the peace and joy in Paradise. Imagine the time when the angel of death will come and say, "Time is up. Now you must go with me." And then visualise the moment when you will be standing before Allah (SWT) and He will be deciding about your future. And let this moment be the time to make a firm decision to do all that you can, for as long as you can, to reach Paradise. Then make dua to Allah (SWT), cry before Him like a child, asking Him to help you get there. From then on, ask Allah (SWT) for Paradise, whenever you like and as much as you want. You may ask for it in whichever words you like:

"اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَا قَرَّبَ إِلَيْهَا مِنْ قَوْلٍ أَوْ عَمَلٍ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا قَرَّبَ إِلَيْهَا مِنْ قَوْلٍ أَوْ عَمَلٍ ."

O Allah, I ask You for Paradise and for that which brings one closer to it, in word and deed, and I seek refuge in You from Hell and from that which brings one closer to it, in word and deed.

(Ibn e Majah)

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اللهم انى اسالك ايمانا لا يرتد، ونعيما لا ينفد، وقرّة لا تنقطع ورافقة نبيك سيدنا محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم فى اعلى جنات الخلد

O Allah! I ask you for a faith that is never taken away, blessings that never end, a joy that always lasts and the companionship of your Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the highest ranks of eternal Paradise. (Ibn e Abi Shaibah)

To develop new habits and improve your attitude, character and personality is a slow and lifelong process. It has to take effect step by step, for as long as you live. On the contrary, to fall in love with something, to desire something from the bottom of your heart, being restless to achieve it, and throw your entire self into it ...that hardly takes a moment.

Love can happen at first sight. And once a man is dominated by the longing and desire for something, he leaps to it.

### **Blessings and Positive Outcomes**

This resolution is imperative since it will determine the outline of your *tarbiyyah*, along with its method and its techniques.

It will serve you as a standard. For example it will help you decide what to say and what not to say, and what is the right way to say, likewise what you should do and what you should not do, which personality trait you need to acquire, which ones to throw out... you need to determine all of these while keeping in mind as to what will bring you closer to Paradise and what will take you away from it and closer to Hell; what will make Allah happy and what will displease Him. While acquiring knowledge of *fiqh*-related issues may be difficult, these simple everyday things are known to everyone. That's why, like we said, your resolution will be your greatest guide and teacher.

This resolution will also provide you with all the strength, spirit and passion that you will need on the path of *tarbiyyah*. The truth is, if your heart decides that you've got to reach your destination, that you need to make something out of yourself, that you've got to achieve something, then this decision itself is sufficient for your *tarbiyyah*. Instead of an external source, it will be your heart which will keep you moving forward and rectifying your direction. The examples are abundant. People came to Makkah, they accepted Islam, made Paradise their aim, learned a few surahs, and returned home. Tufail bin Amr Dosi (r.a.) and Abuzar Ghiffari (r.a.) are two such examples. It was only when Rasul Allah (SAW) had migrated to Madina, that they came to him (peace be upon him) again. While in between, they not only remained steadfast in their faith but continued to grow and progress in it.

As you make this resolution, you must remember that besides Paradise, all other objectives, however beloved and dear to you, are not your ultimate goal. *Tarbiyyah* is not the goal. A kind personality is not the goal. Good behaviour is not the goal. Dawah and jihad are not the goals. The establishment of

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Islam is not the goal. All of these aims are only our means to get to paradise, provided they are good, sincere and *akhirah*-oriented. On their own, these too are mortal.

If you can truly understand and remember this point, then many obstacles on your path to *tarbiyyah* will be removed, many problems will be resolved, and many kinds of *fitna* will be uprooted. The path to *tarbiyyah* will become easy and clear. Not only tarbiyyah but acting on Deen as a whole will become full of such blessings. In fact, obeying every teaching and direction of our Deen will help us in our tarbiyyah. After all the path of our Deen IS the path of *tarbiyyah*.

As a result, when you will face disappointments and failures in your aims, it will not cause you to give up, or feel discouraged, as none of this is your ultimate goal. Your one and only goal is Paradise. Each and every effort is to achieve Paradise. There is always an opportunity of forgiveness after a sin, and forgiveness will also take you to Paradise. When someone does not accept your dawah, when someone causes injury to you and your dignity, when even after spending years in service of the deen you are not seeing results, still you will keep on moving with the same determination and resolve. You were never running after these worldly things. You were only running towards Paradise.

You will then have no desire or expectation for perfection in yourself and in others. Nor the shortcomings that others may have will cause you to abandon your work because abandoning it will mean you are going to lose Paradise. Perfection is an attribute of Allah alone. The perfection you seek is only granted to angels who are incapable of committing sin and yet the angels are not destined for Jannah. Therefore, wherever you find a flaw and imperfection in yourself and in the effort, you are making for Paradise, you must seek refuge in Allah, ask forgiveness from Him, and keep on walking on the path to forgiveness and Paradise.

### **The Inclusive Nature of This Goal**

Make no mistake; making Paradise your ultimate goal does not mean that you would not need to work and achieve other goals. The point is that if you will set other goals that require *tarbiyyah*, Paradise might not be on your list. However, if you make Paradise your goal, it is so comprehensive that it will encompass all other kinds of goals, along with the specific *tarbiyyah* required for those goals.

Let's think about it in this way. Suppose you honestly fulfil your obligations. Don't you think it will take you to Paradise? If you do business or farming and manage your finances to increase your income in order to help other people meet their needs, don't you believe that it will bring you closer to Paradise? And if all that you do is done with sincerity, will it not grant you Paradise? Then how can it be that the training you went through to do these duties efficiently is different from the *tarbiyyah* that promises you Paradise? Isn't it also a part of Islam to remove what is meaningless and useless from our lives? And isn't the training which helps us in utilizing our time effectively and meaningfully the part of same *tarbiyyah* which leads us to Paradise?



## **My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility**

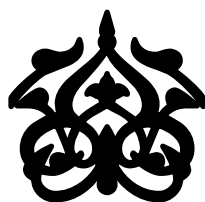
Similarly, is it not that praying our *salat* on time helps us in reaching Paradise? Is it not that keeping all the promises and fulfilling them in time makes us deserving of Paradise? In fact, punctuality regarding keeping promises is amongst those esteemed good deeds for which Paradise is promised.

Hence, from whichever aspect you will look into this, you will realize that all forms of apparently worldly training, which are not for an unlawful purpose and are made with the intention of Paradise, are in fact a *tarbiyyah* for Paradise. You will find that this goal is a very inclusive and a highly comprehensive one.

### **The very first step**

So, the very first step on the path of *tarbiyyah* is that you make Paradise, and Paradise alone, the most beloved and treasured goal of your entire life. Fix your eyes on it and do not let them waver. Fill your heart with the desire, the urge and anticipation to earn Paradise. If you are dreaming, dream about it. If you are walking, walk towards it. If you are running, run towards it.

This must be a very conscious and well considered decision. It has to have the full consent of your heart. It should be engraved in your heart and should always remain in front of your eyes. You must revive it again and again, and talk about it quite often.





2

***TARBIYYAH IS EASY AND IT'S IN OUR HANDS***

It seems easy enough to wish for Paradise; we even feel the desire for it pulsate in our hearts. However, the *tarbiyyah* that is required to attain it appears to be a daunting task. At times it even looks impossible. It appears as if it's not in our hands to be able to spend the life in a way that we enter Paradise and be able to walk on the path to paradise.

But once you have taken the first step on the path to *tarbiyyah*, and you have decided that nothing is dearer to you than Allah's good pleasure and His Paradise, then the first thing we need to realize and to believe is that this path is easy and that it is very much in our hands to enter Paradise. Obviously this path has to be easy and attainable so that we can easily walk on it till it leads us all the way to Paradise. To internalize this truth once is not enough. You have to keep reminding yourself of it so that it remains fresh in your mind.

By declaring it easy and manageable, we are not implying that there is no need to work hard on your *tarbiyyah*, that there will be no struggle, no pain, no unpleasant situations, that nothing will hurt you, or that you will not face difficulties and tough times. No, any of these things can definitely happen. However, what we mean is that to combat every challenging and painful situation, you will find the strength and forbearance along with the divine help that is needed to get past it. Whatever task has been asked of us, we have been equipped with the resources needed to accomplish it.

**Why Tarbiyyah Needs to Be Easy? The Requirements of The Test**

We are not simply saying that *tarbiyyah* is easy. We are saying that *tarbiyyah* needs to be easy. You must understand this apparently surprising claim. It's being easy has to do with the very purpose of humankind's existence. It being easy has to do with the relationship between humans and their creator Allah (SWT), and the immense Mercy and Justice that is expected of Him.

For what purpose has Allah ta'ala sent you to this earth? He has sent you to test you on whether you do good on earth or spread evil. He is testing you regarding what path you choose - the path of gratitude or the path of ingratitude. He is testing whether you will believe or disbelieve. He is testing if you will submit to Him or stand against Him. He is testing if you will worship Him alone or will worship others in His place. However, you may phrase this, the matter remains the same at its heart. The objective is to test you:

## My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

"(It is Allah) Who created death and life that He might try you as to which of you is better in deed" (Al-Mulk, 67:2).

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

"Surely, we showed him the Right Path, regardless of whether he chooses to be thankful or unthankful (to his Lord)" (Al-Insan, 76:3).

Since it is a test, you have been given free will and freedom. Giving you your autonomy was imperative. It is pointless to test those who are helpless and powerless. Doing so would be a departure from what we know of Allah's Mercy and Justice. How can it be that He would test you through your actions to determine your reward or punishment, and yet give you no freedom on how to act? It's the moon, the sun, the stars and the angels who cannot disobey Allah (SWT). They are incapable of doing such a thing. So, naturally there is no Day of Reckoning for them nor is there the possibility that they will ever enter Paradise as a reward for what they have done.

This test is of a strange nature. Even though the duration of this exam is very brief and limited - its two possible outcomes, Paradise and Hellfire, are eternal.

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ

"Whatever you have is bound to pass away and whatever is with Allah will always last"

(An-Nahl, 16:96).

Since the promise of Paradise, the ultimate goal of our life, rests on our own efforts for *tarbiyyah*, our Lord, in His Infinite Mercy and Immense Bounty allowed the path to Paradise, and the path of *tarbiyyah*, to be easy and accessible for everyone. We can easily observe His principle of mercy and blessing at work around us.

The air we breathe is essential in order to keep our bodies alive and grow. We cannot survive if the air is taken away from us for even a few moments, so air is always available everywhere, for each living creature that requires it, and it is accessed without any effort. Water, too, is a necessity for life but it is to a lesser degree than air. Although it's not as common and abundant as the air we breathe in, still, it reaches everywhere with great ease and is usually available for those who require it. The *tarbiyyah* that we are talking about is essential for not just this temporary life but to survive in our everlasting life. Must it not be as easily and freely accessible in its own way as air and water?

## My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility

The test is for everyone and Paradise is offered to all who pass this test. Would it be befitting of Allah's Mercy and Justice that He would put everyone of us through the test, ask us to participate in the race of life, make Paradise the reward for the winners of the race, but then make the race so difficult and impossible that not everyone could gather the courage to take part? How can anyone believe in such a thing?

This is why we see that Allah has taken upon Himself the responsibility to help us reach Paradise and the *tarbiyyah* required to race towards Paradise:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ وَإِنَّ لَنَا لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَىٰ

"Surely it is for Us to show the Right Way, and to Us belong the Next Life and the present"

(Al-Layl, 92:12-13).

The path to Paradise, the path of submission, has been named *al-yusra*:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَغْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ

"As for him who gave out his wealth (for Allah's sake) and abstained (from disobeying Him) and affirmed the Truth of goodness: We shall ease him towards the easy way (*al Yusra*)"

(Al-Layl, 92:5-7).

And Allah (SWT) says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

"...Allah wants ease (*yusra*) and not hardship for you..." (Al-Baqarah, 2:185).

He further says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا

"Allah wants to lighten your burdens, for man was created weak" (An-Nisa, 4:28).

Similarly, Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) stated quite clearly: "*ad-dini yusr*". The path of the *deen* (the path of Paradise and *tarbiyyah*), is an easy path. The companions of the Prophet (PBUH), who would go on to invite the world to walk on the path of Paradise and forgiveness, were repeatedly instructed, with great passion and warmth:

يسرو ولا تعسرو ، وبشرو ولا تنفرو

‘Make ease and do not make things difficult for people, give good news and do not repel people.’

Hence, we must believe and accept the good news that the test we find ourselves in is easy, and so is the *tarbiyyah* required for it. This means that we can practice this *deen* and walk to Paradise with ease.

## My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility

### The Mercy and Justice of Our Creator

It is through Allah's Mercy and Justice that He extends an invitation to us:

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ

"...and Allah calls you, by His leave, towards Paradise and forgiveness..." (Al-Baqarah, 2:221).

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ

"...Allah calls you to the abode of peace..." (Yunus, 10:25).

He encourages us to run for Paradise.

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ

"And run to the forgiveness of your Lord and to a Paradise..." (Al-Imran, 3:133).

If He had chosen to make the path difficult for us, so much so that walking on it would be dangerous, then we would have failed, and it would have been as if He had set us up for that failure. This is not what we know of our Creator, nor what we attribute to Him. A woman asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): "Can a mother throw her child into a burning fire?" With tears in his eyes, The Prophet (PBUH) replied: "No, but people worship other gods beside Him!"

In the Qur'an, Allah says:

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِن شَكَرْتُمْ وَآمَنْتُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا

"Why should Allah punish you if you are grateful to Him and believe in Him? Allah is All-Appreciative, All-Knowing" (An-Nisa, 4:147).

When you begin your work of *tarbiyyah*, begin it with the belief and trust that the path is easy. You have to have a belief and trust that Allah will not put you in an unfair test where you are at a disadvantage. And that Allah does not want to see you fail since punishing you will give Him nothing.

You must also believe that you have been equipped with all that you will need to get through whatever is asked of you - be it ordinary or special - and to emerge victorious from whichever trials are in store for you.

### An Aspect of Ease: Appealing To Human Fitrah

## My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility

There are many aspects of ease. We will direct your attention to three such aspects which are important to remember.

The first is this: Allah has made mankind's *fitrah*, your *fitrah*, such that you like piety. You desire to be pious. You think piety is a virtue and you consider it to be beautiful. Piety is compatible with your temperament. It is familiar to you. You can recognize it. No matter how evil or bad a man becomes, he still has room in his heart for truth, kindness, good behaviour, trustworthiness, loyalty, and the keeping of promises. Every human being dislikes the murder of the innocent, cruelty, abuse, and jealousy.

When you do a good deed, your heart is happy. You feel contented. When you do a bad deed, your heart is restless. Your heart starts to rust and your own self-respect decreases in your eyes. Rasul Allah (peace up be upon him) described good and evil to one of his companions in the same way. Allah has called this *fitrat ul Allah*, which He gave to all humans.

Hence, the path of piety and righteousness is straight and easy. It can only become difficult when we make ourselves twisted and crooked. If a square block cannot enter a round hole then the fault does not rest with the hole. If crops do not grow at the peak of a mountain then it is not the fault of the rain. If we make our heart and personality virtuous, pious, and devoted to Allah, then travelling on *al-yusra* will be easy for us. In the Qur'an, it is explained in a very clear and meaningful manner:

فَسَيِّسْرُهُ لِّئِيسْرَى

"We shall make him easy for al-yusra (the ease)" (Al-Layl, 92:7).

If you check the literal meaning of the verse you will see that it does not read that "We will make *al-yusra* easy for him" rather "he will be made easy to walk on *al-yusra*."

The heart can be made submissive through an easy prescription as well, which we will later reveal at its own time.

### **The Second Ease: Life Is Itself A Training Session**

The second aspect of the ease connected with *tarbiyyah* is that Allah has made our entire life and the whole universe a training session for us. Some types of training exercises have been made compulsory for us - such as *salat*, *zakat*, *hajj*, and fasting. Yet, everything that occurs in our life - be it an incident, a situation we find ourselves in, a feeling that passes through our heart, a blessing, a nuisance, anything good or bad that happens to us, heaven and earth and everything we come across that exists - is an opportunity for *tarbiyyah* if we are willing and ready to grab it.

Those people who have recognized these ever-available opportunities for *tarbiyyah*, are referred to by Allah as:

## My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ

"Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting or (reclining) on their backs..." (Al Imran, 3:191)

This is because, سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ "Soon shall We show them Our Signs on the horizons and in their own beings..." (Fussilat, 41:53).

The one who reads the revealed Scripture along with the inscriptions of nature available everywhere around him and then seeks his *tarbiyyah* from the lessons that life has to offer, in fact, does not need to depend on any other set of training courses. Other compulsory, recommended or voluntary exercises for training exist as your guide and help. These other workouts can only be truly effective when they help you understand your whole life as a training session for your *tarbiyyah*.

Think about it this way: every good deed you do is a source of your *tarbiyyah*. First, you need to perceive it to be a good deed. Next, try to develop a love for it in your heart. Be grateful to Allah for giving you the opportunity to do it. Feel the hope and expect the reward in return for it. Find the joy and happiness in it. And through it, ask Allah to grant you His light and fill every pore of your being with it.

The perimeter of good deeds is limitless. Earning your living is a good deed and so is spending on yourself, on your household and on your family. Investing in your business is also a good deed. Planting a seed is a good deed, whether you eat its fruit yourself or birds and animals eat from it. Even if someone steals fruit from it, that too adds to your good deeds. Intimacy between a husband and wife is also a good deed. Each of these good deeds carries the potential to help you in your *tarbiyyah*.

Similarly, we assume a sin to be the biggest source of discouragement. However, each sin can take you closer to your Creator, if you let it. For that, you must feel the gravity of the sin you have committed. You must allow your eyes to weep. Let your heart overflow with remorse and shame. Have faith that no one apart from Allah can save you from the repercussions of the wrong you have done. Raise your hands before Allah, bow your head before Him, cry in front of Him for forgiveness... You will realize just how many opportunities there are in this sin to add to your *tarbiyyah*.

I am not recommending sinning. No doubt it is important to feel hatred for sins and to avoid them in every possible way. But there is wisdom in the fact that man is not free from sin. If a desire to sin arises within your heart, and you stop by remembering your Creator then that self-control is a huge good deed. However intense and forceful was your desire for the sin, the fact that you stopped out of fear of Allah (SWT) earns you the same level of virtue.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ



## **My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility**

"But he who feared to stand before his Lord, and restrained himself from evil desires, most surely his abode shall be Paradise" (An-Nazi'at, 79:40-41).

Similar is the case with blessings. Every blessing is a source of *tarbiyyah*, even those blessings which may appear mundane and ordinary like every breath we take, every morsel of food we eat, every sip of water we drink, each moment we experience, the safety of our body, our provision and also those blessings which we consider to be extremely special. Remember the One who granted you these blessings. Fill your heart with gratitude towards Him. Do not consider these blessings to be the result of the work of your own hands or knowledge. Nor must you ever attribute these blessings to any other creation. With your heart and soul, say "Alhamdulillah". Then, see how many moral and spiritual diseases are cured in the matter of an instance.

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ "If you are grateful, you will be given more... and more." If you show this gratitude at the opportunity of a good deed, think of how many more good deeds you will be able to do and how easy and fast *tarbiyyah* will be.

It is the same case with hardships. Every hardship is a source of *tarbiyyah*. Remember who this hardship is from. It is from the One without whose permission not even a leaf can move from its place, The One, who is Rahman and Raheem, The One, who is your well-wisher and not your enemy. So, be patient. *Sabr* (patience) is indeed the master key to all of your *tarbiyyah*. Were these hardships not to befall you, then how else would you ever receive the magnificent blessing of *sabr*?

## **The Third Ease: It Is in Our Control**

Let's consider the third aspect of ease. It is impossible that Allah's Mercy and Justice will allow you to take on a task that is beyond your capacity. It is also unlike the standards of any exam that a candidate is tested on something beyond their ability. How can you be tested on something you have not been taught? How can you be held accountable and punished for a task that was beyond your capacity and ability?

After illustrating the basic principles of Islam in Surat al Baqarah which comprises of the basic rules and regulations of our Deen, Allah (SWT) clearly states His extremely important Sunnah at the end of the Surah:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

"Allah does not lay a responsibility on anyone beyond his capacity; In his favour shall be whatever good each one does, and against him whatever evil he does" (al-Baqarah, 2:286).



## My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility

This principle has been asserted at multiple instances: at a time of intense persecution, coercion and torture, if one utters words of disbelief, with a heart that is in a state of full belief, then there is no sin and no blame. Sins committed in a moment of absentmindedness and forgetfulness are forgiven, since they were beyond our control. All desires and sinful thoughts that enter the heart are forgiven since we have no control over them. In fact, if a man desires to sin but controls himself from following that desire, then he is rewarded for that restraint and self-control. The emotions in our hearts and its ups and downs are not judged either since those are out of our control. The obligation of *qiyam-ul-Layl* (spending the night in prayer) ended when Islam was rapidly accepted by people, since:

عَلِمَ أَنَّ لَنْ تُحْصُوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ

“He knows that you cannot keep an accurate count of it, so He has shown mercy to you. So now recite as much of the Qur'an as you can" (al-Muzammil, 73:20).

There is a verse where Allah ta'ala directed Muslims in these words: **اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ** "...Fear Allah as He should be feared..." (al-Imran, 3:102). On hearing this, the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) started trembling with fear. For who can bear the responsibility of practising *taqwa* for Allah (SWT) as is due for Him to be practised! Hence, the explanation of the verses was revealed as a relief: **فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ** "Fear Allah according to your best capacity". Indeed, the end result of practising *tarbiyyah* is learning how to practice *taqwa* and remaining God-conscious. So, we can easily say, "Do your *tazkiyah* and your *tarbiyyah*, however much you can according to your capacity." *Tarbiyyah* requires nothing more from us; we have not been forced to do more than our capacity to get to Paradise. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) would take the oath for *ita'at* (obedience) and *jihad* (struggle to uphold Islam), he gave special attention to include the words, "according to your capacity".

Therefore, the obligations which Allah ta'ala has declared to be compulsory for you, and the things which He has declared *haraam* (strictly forbidden) for you, are such that you can accomplish with ease. This can never be impossible for you. Be it *ibadaat* (obligatory acts of worship) or *jihad*, eating and drinking habits, money, or our relationship and dealings with others; which includes fulfilling your promise, doing justice, doing every work with excellence, taking care of your blood relatives, or things like envy, curiosity, suspicions, backbiting etc. If you are unable to obey Allah's commands regarding these matters - either because you have some lame excuse, or because you have been left with no other options – in such a situation no *fatwa* can assist you, nor will satisfying others with excuses will aid you to escape the accountability on the Day of Judgment.

These are the times when you should question yourself. Will you be able to satisfy Allah ta'ala, who is the Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, with any of your excuses?

## **My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility**

If you are really constrained and bound by the situation, then yes, Allah will accept your excuse. You will not be questioned or held accountable, nor will this harm your *tarbiyyah*. However, if your effort cannot satisfy Allah, then no fatwa nor any person can lessen your burden for you. This belief and approach will make your path easy for you in those situations which are not directly related to the domain of do's and don'ts.

So, keep working on your *tarbiyyah* with the conviction that there is nothing, nor can there be any such thing, that will become an obstacle on your path to Paradise. Neither is there anything nor can there be any such thing, which is absolutely essential to have on this path and yet is beyond your reach or capacity. This conviction will give you ease and comfort on your path of *tarbiyyah* and lessen the difficulties which others complain about while treading on this path.

### **Is it in our control or not?**

In this matter, everything rests on a simple principle - is this matter in our control or not? Do we have any authority over it?

You often say: "I have no control over xyz... I cannot obey that command... I am helpless and cannot stop doing that wrong...". What you need to first see is whether you have any control or not in that particular case. If this matter has to do with Allah's commands then certainly you have a degree of control because, as we have already explained, Allah has not commanded anything for you which is beyond your capacity. Apart from Allah's direct commands, whichever matter is out of your capacity, you should not be unreasonably concerned about it nor should you fall into any *fitnah* because of it; do not let it stop you from any good deed you were doing and lose your path as a result of it.

### **Trials and Deceptions**

The biggest *fitnah* on the path of *tarbiyyah* is to get disappointed and abandon whatever efforts and struggle you are doing.

The heart becomes an abode for different kinds of conjectures. They can be regarding Allah, His Messenger (peace be upon him), and his teachings. The urge to sin also emerges and tries to take control of you.

Sometimes circumstances or people you deal with can lead to disappointment and misgivings. But whatever doubts emerge in your heart, they are not something that you have control over. As a result, you are not going to be held accountable for them. Nor will you lose Paradise due to them. Then why do you worry or lose hope?

What is really in your control is to close the doors to any pathways that may lead to bad thoughts and try to work on all good thoughts that you can make room for in your heart. This is all that you are capable of doing. And you should consider this to be sufficient.

## **My Tarbiyyah: My own Responsibility**

You make commitments with yourself over and over, and with that same frequency, you keep breaking those commitments. A commitment that never breaks, a resolution that is unfailing... these too are not in your control. In fact, this vulnerability was kept in your nature by your Creator for the sake of your test. You will not be held accountable for it or lose your chances of entering Paradise due to this.

The most difficult matter is that of sins. It is connected with the weakness of one's resolve. Sins occur, and they occur again and again. We repent each time and yet we continue committing sins. We do this knowingly. Despite being aware of Allah's commands, we bow our heads to our desires. But there is no reason to despair or be disappointed due to those sins. It is not in man's control that he completely rids himself of sinning, or stops himself from sinning again and again, or to avoid breaking the promises he made during his repentance. This status has only been granted to the angels and the prophets (peace be upon them all).

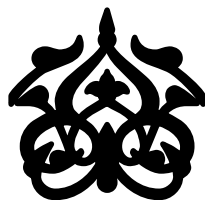
Having the authority to commit sins is a prerequisite for the kind of freedom Allah gave you to earn Paradise. If you had the ability to absolutely stop sinning, then Allah would have created a new species of creation that would commit sins and ask forgiveness from Him. This is why wherever in the Qur'an you are invited to seek Paradise, there is another invitation preceding it which is to seek forgiveness.

Sometimes deviant feelings in your heart cause disappointment and sorrow. It may also disappoint you when you do not achieve the expected emotions in your heart. Similarly, the sudden ups and downs in your feelings may also cause you to worry. But you have not been granted control over your heart; you can only control your actions. You should aim for the love, fear, and consciousness of Allah's presence etc. and strive to follow the steps that are in your control to create these emotions and feelings in your heart. However, how much of these desired conditions you are able to create and how long they last is again a matter beyond your reach. You will not be questioned for it nor will it affect your chances of Paradise. Then why worry and grieve? You must put an end to these apprehensions.

Everyone desires perfection, but perfection is not within your control. In fact, it would be uncharacteristic of your human nature to become perfect. You must stop continuing this futile quest. Sometimes you are disappointed at the faults of others and think that working on *tarbiyyah* is useless, but this again is an immature attitude. It is not your job to make others become good, nor is it in your control. You are not supposed to lift the burden of any other soul. Remain focused and keep walking on the *siraat-e-mustaqeem*. Keep working on the task to correct yourself and those around you.

### **Always Remember:**

Once you have made Paradise your ultimate goal and made the resolution to work on your own *tarbiyyah*, the first thing you must remember is that this path - of *tarbiyyah*, of the deen, of guidance, of Paradise - is an easy path and is absolutely something that you can achieve. It becomes difficult only when you make it difficult for yourself or you become difficult for it. If you will remember this, it will keep your spirits high, help you work with confidence, you will never lose hope, and Allah's help will always be with you.



3

## OUR RESOLUTION AND ACTION IS ESSENTIAL

Be it achievements in *this*-world or victories in the next-world, *tarbiyyah* is essential for both. Paradise cannot be achieved without doing your own *tarbiyyah* and *tazkiyah*. This path is easy and accessible, and it is in your realm of control.

Be mindful that your *tarbiyyah* can only be done by you. Whatever is imperative for that, make a resolution to do that, make attempts to do that, and start executing concrete actions... without this, your *tarbiyyah* is not possible at all.

Your resolution and your action - your efforts to act however much you can - is the first condition to your *tarbiyyah*. This alone is what is most beloved in Allah's sight and on this alone He has rested all the promises of reward and mercy.

If you don't make a resolution and don't act responsibly for what is necessary for your *tarbiyyah*, then nothing can substitute it. Nothing can repair the damage it will cause. Your resolutions and actions can never be replaced by anything. No one can do the work that you were made responsible for. If you do not act on what you have learned, or have no desire to learn at all, then no teaching and training can benefit you. Apart from your own faith and your own actions, nothing else will make you worthy of Allah's forgiveness and mercy. Nothing else can take you to Paradise.

This is a key principle of *tarbiyyah*. It is as clear and open as daylight and yet despite being so clear, it is unfortunate that this principle is mostly ignored or missed out. This principle is buried underneath

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many wishes or excuses. We forget all about it when we set out in search of countless other external supports. But all promises of external support are merely illusions, just like the mirage of an oasis in a desert.

### Creation, The Test and The Payback Law for Actions:

If you reflect upon it, you will see that this most basic principle of *tarbiyyah* is embedded in the very reason behind our creation. It is the basis and soul of the test for which we were brought to life. We are all being tested regarding our good deeds. And it is for this test that we are given control over our actions.

The truth is that apart from our own actions, we have no control over anything else. The act of *tarbiyyah* is easy because we are given the freedom to act. But the nature of the test requires that all that we receive, we receive as payback for our resolutions and our actions. If we receive Allah's Mercy, we receive it only as a payback. If we receive His Forgiveness, that too is a payback. And if through His Mercy and Forgiveness, we receive Paradise, then that too is a payback.

If there had been an option to achieve *tarbiyyah* and Paradise without our will, merit or effort, or as a result of someone else's actions and training or due to someone's authority, then the test for which we were born would be rendered meaningless.

No one can pray *salat* on our behalf. No one can fast for us, keep our promises for us, serve other creation for us, or do our jihad for us. No one can do the job that is ours to do. So, if anyone does what we were supposed to do, in a way that we have no part in it, then how can we expect to be rewarded or punished for that. Similarly, if someone forces us to commit a sin, and none of our desire or intention is involved in that action, then we are not responsible or accountable for that sin. من اكراه و قلب مطمئن بالايمان.

There is no punishment for the one who was forced to commit *kufir*, while his heart was content in its state of belief (Hadeeth).

In that same way, if we are forced to carry out a good deed while we are not willing to do it, then why would we receive the reward for it?

And Allah knows best.

Then how can someone else put the effort in the *tarbiyyah* which we are meant to do? And if we are not running around and making efforts for our own *tarbiyyah*, then how can we expect to benefit from someone else's knowledge and *tarbiyyah*? The external factors and efforts for *tarbiyyah* are like rain. Rain is washed off the mountains but every pond, brook, stream, and river take water according to its capacity. Each piece of land grows crops according to its own capability. This most important and basic principle was described by Allah in this way:

لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

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"In his favour shall be whatever good each one does, and against him whatever evil he does" (al-Baqarah, 2:286).

This principle was illustrated most beautifully in the following passage, with significant stress on the fact that it was being written in all the books sent from Allah since the beginning of time:

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى أَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءُ الْأَوْفَى

"Has he not been informed of what is in the Scrolls of Moses, and of Abraham, who lived up to the trust? That no bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another, and that man shall have nothing but what he has striven for, and that (the result of) his striving shall soon be seen, and that he shall then be fully recompensed..." (An-Najm, 53:36-41).

Furthermore, the achievement of Paradise - a reward for being successful in the test - is very clearly and repeatedly being connected to action, hard work, and struggle. It is so consistently iterated that there is no chance for any misunderstandings. That the *tarbiyyah* required to walk on the path to Paradise is not possible in any way other than actions.

We find such ideas present all over the Qur'an: إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ "It is a reward for what they had been doing", الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنْ لَهُمْ (Paradise is for) those who abstain from wrongdoing", "those people who believed and who did virtuous deeds", "race towards Paradise", "compete with others for Paradise", "for it is Paradise for which those who struggle must struggle", and "those who compete with others must compete for this alone". It is like a wave which emerges in every page of the Qur'an.

It is thus proven that desires and wishes, the attention of someone, any speech or religious sermon, or the company of a pious person, cannot give us Paradise. Neither can we expect *tarbiyyah* to be attained with these methods – until and unless it is our own resolution and it is our own effort.

### Nothing is of Any Benefit

If you think that you do not have to make resolutions, nor exert any effort - not even the moving of a finger - to do your own *tarbiyyah*, then mark this: it will not happen. If you think that you will read a few books, join some study circles and it will suffice for your *tarbiyyah*, then remember this: you are mistaken. If you think hearing a heartwarming lecture, or an emotional speech, or attending a training program for *tarbiyyah* will be sufficient: you are mistaken. Being in the company of a human being you deem to be close to perfection, receiving his attention, and having him to hold onto - in the hopes that he will be your saviour - once again, you are mistaken. Until and unless you are willing to make



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your own resolutions and embark on your own actions, you will not get anything. If all this could have happened without your active involvement, then the test, the reward, and the punishment would be irrelevant and meaningless.

If you do not decide to become a better person and put no struggle into it, then even the teaching by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself, or catching his attention, or being in his company will not make you a good person, neither will it prevent you from being an evil person. Even the prophets (peace be upon them all) were not given any authority that overrides the control you have on yourself:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ

"(O Prophet), you cannot grant guidance to whom you please" (Al-Qasas, 28:56).

Our Prophet (peace be upon him) was not given this ability and control, nor was it his responsibility to force people against their will and make them walk on the right path. People who were hypocrites and disbelievers used to sit in the company of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and they carried their corruptions with them on their way out.

وَقَدْ دَخَلُوا بِالْكَفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوا بِهِ

"...whereas, in fact, they come disbelieving, and go away disbelieving..." (Al-Ma'idah, 5:61).

## **The Pressure from Shaytan**

Unless you choose evil for yourself, not even the company and influence of Shaytan can corrupt you - even though he is always accompanying you. He is closely hovering over your soul and circulating in your bloodstream, watching you from places you are not aware of. He is ready to grab you from your left, right, behind, and from your front. Despite all this, he cannot make you act against your will or force you into doing a bad deed. He has not been given any such authority or power over you. He cannot nullify your control over your own actions. In fact, on the Day of Judgement he will stand and declare clearly:

وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ

"I had no power over you except that I called you to my way and you responded to me. So, do not blame me but blame yourselves" (Ibrahim, 14:22).

## **Allah's Help is in The Form of Opportunities He Provides:**



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Without the *tawfiq* (opportunities) given by Allah, you cannot do anything you wish to do. However, bear in mind that you will only receive help from Allah in the form of opportunities when you wholeheartedly make the resolution to walk on the path to Paradise and take practical steps towards it. This point is also very clearly stated:

وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ

"... and He guides to Himself whoever turns to Him in repentance" (Ash-Shuraa, 42:13).

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا

"Whosoever repents and does good, he returns to Allah in the manner that he should"

(Al-Furqan, 25:71).

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى

"But I am indeed Most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does righteous works and keeps to the Right Way" (Taha, 20:82).

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ

"So remember Me and I shall remember you..." (al-Baqarah, 2:152).

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ

"...and fulfil your covenant with Me and I shall fulfil My covenant with you..." (al-Baqarah, 2:40).

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

"If you give thanks, I will certainly grant you more" (Ibrahim, 14:7).

Hence, if you make resolutions and act upon those resolutions, then all good news and glorious promises - that were conditional upon your resolve and action - will be granted to you.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that a person fulfils the mandatory acts of worship. And this is most beloved to Allah. Next, he races to do those tasks which are not mandatory but are beloved to Allah. When he does this, Allah (SWT) makes that person's sight, hearing, hands and legs act according to Allah's will. Yet the responsibility of doing these obligatory and voluntary deeds rests totally upon that person. For how else can he expect to receive Allah's blessings?

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In another hadith, it is said that whoever takes one step towards Allah, Allah moves towards him a hand's length. Whoever walks towards Allah, Allah runs towards him. Look at this endless Mercy of Allah which assists us in our quest for *tarbiyyah* and Paradise. But here again, we must not forget that this Mercy is for those who take the initiative and start to walk towards Allah. The one who remains standing, indifferent and carefree, what will he receive of that endless Mercy? The only condition on humankind is that they decide and start making efforts; all the rest will be available to them from Allah in the form of His bountiful assistance, and merciful care.

### What Is Required Are Resolutions and Efforts:

While you must uproot the misconception that you can remain on the path of *tarbiyyah* without any resolutions and actions, at the same time you also need to understand that Allah does not need perfection in our actions, nor does He demand that our actions are fully and successfully accomplished. Nothing is in your control except putting in your utmost effort for the action. The success, appreciation, and reward are all promised based on this effort that you put in:

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا

"But he who desires the Hereafter and strives for it in the manner he should, and is a true believer, his striving will come to fruition" (Al-Isra, 17:19).

This verse, which comprises of many of the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, cuts at the roots of the *fitnah* that becomes an obstacle when we attempt to act and put in the effort for our *tarbiyyah*. Sometimes you are plagued by the worry that your action is way below the desired standard, that it has many flaws and weaknesses, that there is no way it would be accepted. Sometimes you are less worried about the action and more worried about the state of your heart; you feel there is no *khushu* in your *salat*, that your heart lacks emotions, and that your eyes have no tears. Sometimes you are less concerned about your action and more concerned about the absence of desired outcomes; you pray *salat* and yet you are unable to abandon falsehood or lewdness. Or, you fast but you do not feel *taqwa* (God-consciousness). Sometimes you are disheartened by failure; you are doing *dawah*, you are putting in your utmost efforts, you are making all the sacrifices you should be making... and yet people refuse to listen, and yet Islam has not been established, and yet there is no Islamic state. Despite all your efforts at your *tarbiyyah*, you find weakness in your commitment; you remain unable to control yourself. You are disappointed and discouraged over and over again.

However, you must keep in mind that none of this - which upsets you to the point that you quit your struggle - is required to succeed at your *tarbiyyah* or is a prerequisite to entering Paradise. It will help you to be able to control your distress and disappointment, you will never again reach the abyss where you discontinue both your efforts and actions out of despair.

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### Resolutions:

We have mentioned the word resolution again and again. It is mentioned in the Qur'an as well. A resolution is in your control. It is a pre-requisite for your *tarbiyyah*. It is the primary driving force for your *tarbiyyah*.

### What is A Resolution?

It is a very common misconception to regard a resolution as a mere wish. It is said: "I so wish I could wake up for Fajr and pray on time but I can't seem to wake up." This "wish" is not the same as a "resolution" to wake up and pray *salat* on time. Let's think about it this way: If you have to catch a flight at the crack of dawn, or have a meeting with a very important person regarding some problem or profit, will your eyes not open then? Will you not make sure to wake up in time? This is a common example of a task that is not as important to you as Paradise. From this example, you can imagine what status you have given to other important tasks and struggles for your *deen* and for your *tarbiyyah*.

For a resolution, you must believe in the value and need of what you desire. It also includes a passion and a conscious decision for it. When all this is combined, you find a resolution growing within yourself. When the Qur'an refers to *يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ* "...seeking His pleasure..." (Al-Kahf, 18:28) or *مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ* *حَزَنَ الْآخِرَةِ* "whoever seeks the harvest of the Hereafter..." (Ash-Shuraa, 42:20), it is using the word "seeks" in the same meaning as the word "resolves".

Of course, this resolve can grow weak, it can break, one can sometimes work against his resolve or be forgetful of it. But on the whole, it is this resolve that is required to take the first step to seek Allah's good pleasure, Paradise, and one's own *tarbiyyah*. A resolution is needed for every task that is essential to walk on the path of the *deen* and on the path of one's own *tarbiyyah*. In just a matter of moments, repentance and a conscious effort to turn to Allah can lead to the renewal of a neglected or forgotten resolution.

If this resolution is missing from our lives, then even the endless showering of teaching and training will go to waste. On the other hand, if it is present, then even the slightest drizzle of coaching and learning will give us an abundant output. In fact, even if the teaching and training, lectures and instructions, and study and lessons are not available, your resolve itself will become the most effective teacher and instructor for you. It will show you the right way and will give you the conviction to remain steadfast while at the same time it will prevent you from going off the path.

Such a resolve requires the single-minded focus and superiority over all the principles in our life. Obedience of Allah (SWT) and following anything which is not from Allah (SWT) cannot be your goals simultaneously. Both the next-world and this-world cannot be your targets together. If you tried

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to board two boats at the same time, you would never reach your destination and it will cause your resolve to remain weak and shaky.

A resolve can become strong and focused if you truly believe in the need and value of the goal of your resolution i.e. Allah, Paradise, and the *tarbiyyah* that can help you achieve them. This resolve will be just as strong as your longing for Paradise and the love of Allah. For this reason, we are told that your love for Allah, His Messenger (peace be upon him), and struggle in the way of Allah must surpass all other loves. This is why, at multiple times, the Qur'an describes Paradise in great detail and at great length in such a way that it becomes a living reality which we can see with our own eyes.

We have told you earlier - and intend to tell you again - that self-improvement and character-building is a gradual and time-consuming process.

A resolve can be formed in the blink of an eye, and it often happens. It can also crumble to dust in the blink of an eye. But there is no need to despair: it can return again in the blink of that same eye.

### Efforts:

When there is a resolution, it is bound to appear in action. Even when you are incapable to immediately take steps for your resolution, you should still have the eagerness, yearning, and urge to move in that direction.

At the very least, your heart, gaze, attention, and the overall direction of your life will revolve around that resolution. If you are unable to walk, your soul would remain restless in its longing to walk. Your eyes would remain fixed on your destination. Your heart would keep leaping towards it. And whenever it would be possible, your steps will take you in that direction.

The Qur'an has described all possible situations of effort:

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

"Behold, I have turned my face in exclusive devotion to the One Who originated the heavens and the earth..." (Al-An'am, 6:79).

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"Say: 'Surely my Prayer, all my acts of worship, and my living and my dying are for Allah alone, the Lord of the whole universe' (Al-An'am, 6:162).

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إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"Such was Abraham that when his Lord said to him: "Submit," he said: "I have submitted to the Lord of the Universe"" (Al-Baqarah, 2:131).

فَاسْعَوْا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ

"...hasten to the remembrance of Allah and give up all trading" (Al-Jumu'ah, 62:9).

Bear in mind that the more you keep striving, the more your hardships will become easier to face. A man once had a dream in which an elder said to him that when he wakes up in the morning, he should pick up the first thing he sees and place it in his mouth. The man woke up and when he got out of his house, the first thing he saw was a hill. He lost his courage. How does one put a hill in his mouth? The elder appeared again and said: At least start walking towards it. The man began to walk towards the hill. The nearer he got to the hill, the smaller it appeared. When he reached it, he saw that instead of a hill it was a chunk of raw sugar. He picked it up and placed it in his mouth. Whichever of the tasks you deem to be difficult, dangerous and impossible in matters of *deen* and *tarbiyyah*, are all like that hill.

This is the lesson we learn from a man's story told by the Prophet (peace be upon him). This man had committed 99 murders. He went to a pious and God-fearing man, in hopes of repentance. The pious man turned him away. That man committed the hundredth murder - this time he killed that pious man. Then he went to visit a scholar.

The scholar said: "Yes, the door to forgiveness is always open. You should repent. However, you should leave this town and go to the one which is full of pious people." The man began walking to the town. On the way, death overtook him. As he lay dying, he turned his chest towards the town he was heading to. Meanwhile, the angels of mercy and the angels of punishment began arguing as to who would capture his soul. An angel was sent who came and announced: "Measure the distances. If his body is nearer to the town he was heading to, as opposed to the town he was leaving behind, then the angels of mercy will take his soul. If not, then the angels of punishment will deal with him." Allah (SWT) commanded the land to spread so that the distance between the man and the town he was leaving would increase. He also commanded the land between the man and his destination to reduce. When measured, the town of pious people was one foot closer than the town of bad people. So, the angels of mercy took his soul.

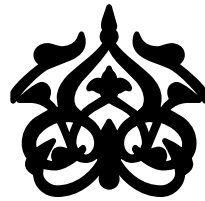
An entire book could be written based on the lessons and secrets regarding life after death found in this story. But the objective is evident: If the intention is sincere, the resolve is strong, and efforts are being made to carry out the action, then wait and see how Allah (SWT)'s Mercy assists you in reaching your beloved destination.

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### **Concluding Note:**

Remember that *tarbiyyah* will take place solely due to your own resolve and your own efforts. If your resolve and effort are present then each and every step for *tarbiyyah* will benefit you. Allah (SWT)'s infinite Mercy will also surround you. On the other hand, if you do not start to work on your *tarbiyyah* then no one can help you.

Be prepared to walk and plan well to keep on walking. This is the first step... and this is going to be the last step too.



## **Goal of ICNA Canada**

The goal of ICNA Canada is to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) by total submission to Him and through the realization of true and universal message of Islam, which was revealed by Allah (SWT) in the last book, “Al-Qur’an” and through His last messenger, Muhammad (SAW).

## **Objectives**

The objectives of ICNA Canada are as follows:

1. Invite mankind towards submission to the Creator by using all possible means of communication
2. Motivate Muslims to perform their duty of being witnesses unto humanity by their words and deeds, individually and collectively
3. Invite Muslims to establish Islam in all aspects of their lives
4. Offer educational and training opportunities to increase Islamic knowledge, to enhance character, and to develop the skills of all those who are associated with ICNA Canada
5. Oppose immorality and oppression in all forms and work for peace, justice, and equality among all segments of the community, especially the poor and underprivileged
6. Strengthen the bonds of humanity by serving all those in need in Canada or elsewhere in the world, and work for their betterment regardless of race, color, sex, religion, or origin
7. Establish community centers, educational institutions, welfare projects and places of worship for Muslims
8. Organize those who agree to work for these objectives in the discipline of ICNA Canada.
9. Cooperate with other organizations for the attainment of similar objectives



**ICNA Sisters Canada**  
**Islamic Circle of North America**